

To loway for Keeps

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The State Historical Museum, Des Moines, displays a grandfather clock previously owned by the Burnham family. The clock is located in the autograph room, first floor west. Manufactured in Connecticut around 1795 and of English style, the clock stands over seven feet in height and is made of solid mahogany. It is designed to indicate seconds, minutes, hours, days of the month and phases of the moon. It was bequeathed to the Historical Department of Iowa by Judge E. L. Burnham in 1910.

TO IOWAY FOR KEEPS

By Lida L. Greene

Librarian of Iowa State Historical Library

Two years ago LeRoy Shutes of Bloomington, Ill., wrote to ask about early roads through central Iowa. There was a diary in his family, he said, that told about the journey of Hiram Shutes and his brood from Ohio to Iowa during the Civil War. He had retraced their travels via books, maps and concrete pavement, but middle Iowa was so recently settled at the time that he had not been able to locate the trail that crossed the Des Moines River by bridge, ran through Adel and Panora and on to Carroll County. What could we do to help him?

This is the kind of question, need I say, that makes a librarian turn pale. For an era when stage coach routes might change from month to month and state roads were parallel ruts straddling tree stumps or skirting swamps, it takes time, sleuthing and a modicum of ESP to track a pioneering conestoga. Still, we tried.

The staff unlocked map drawers, dug into early gazettters, and even located the original of a chart on blue letter paper captioned, *Newton to Adel, 1850s*. The Shutes had reported following the hand cart trace of the Mormons and since this varied from wet to dry weather and according to the needs of the particular party, we could not be sure where these

pioneers had crossed Walnut and Panther Creeks west of the new capital city. We considered spending an afternoon with old timers in Dallas and Guthrie Counties but, after all, 1862 *was* a long time ago. There were no certain answers.

We remembered LeRoy Shutes, however, and his 20th Century pilgrimage from Ohio to Carroll County, Iowa. We were to hear from the Shutes again.

This spring, along with the flood of letters containing queries about Black Hawk and lost great uncles, we received a mimeographed copy of the Shutes diary, *Eight Hundred Miles—Thirty Six Days*, by Mary Alice Shutes, aged 13, and very much a part of the great adventure. Mary Alice, already feeling like a western cow girl, wrote the opening sentence, May 4, 1862. "Mother Ann and Pa," she began gravely, "asked me to make a daily Diary of our migration from Marsailles, Wyandotte County, Ohio to Jasper Township, Carroll County, Ioway for our family. I am starting today. . . . Knowing we were moving to Ioway for keeps, (Pa) sold out his store goods and moved his shoe-makers equipment to the Tavern (Morrell's) building, which has been our home for several years. Now the covered wagon is partly loaded for the trip. . . ."

The characters in the migration story are much like others of the period but the viewpoint on the journey is as fresh and young as the writer. Uncle Charley, whose humor was endless and as rusty as an old saw, was to manage the covered wagon. The surrey, with an odometer to tick off the miles, would carry Pa, Mother Ann and the baby. Brother Charles and Alice had their own horses, Alice in boy's clothing would be riding "straddle" all the long road to Ioway.

Ioway in 1862 must have seemed half as far away as the dark side of the moon. The evening before they were to leave, Pa rode over alone to say goodbye to his Ma. It was still dark on the morning of May 7 when the children were roused from their quilts to find the lanterns of wagon loaders blinking like fire flies in the gloom. The neighbors had come to fix breakfast and say final farewells. The last box was wedged into place and Uncle Charley climbed onto the seat of the covered wagon. The little boys, still limp with sleep, were bundled

into the back on a pile of bedding. Pa got into the surrey beside Mother Ann and the baby. The older folks seemed half-sad and reluctant about leaving. Charles and Mary Alice knew only the excitement of a great adventure. "Uncle Chuck slapped the lines on the horses back . . . and the wheels began their turning. . . ." The Shutes were on their way to the Unknown—to Ioway and the Indian country.

Ohio, Indiana, Illinois. The usual travel trials plagued the caravan. In spite of regular rest stops, the cows, straggling at the tail gate of the wagon, proved poor emigrants and had to be sold. Meals, cooked over an open fire, tasted smoky even to the hearty, out-door appetites. Still there were small odd pleasures to remember. Pa Shutes bought ham one day for a surprise supper. Once when it was raining they found shelter in a horse shed where there was a cook spot with a fire already going. They stayed long enough for Mother Ann and Alice, full rain barrels handy, to get out the family wash.

As far back as the Wabash River they had been hearing about the spring flood on the Mississippi. The biggest in years. Ferry camps on the east side at Rock Island had been under water. Uncle Charley favored turning off to Muscatine. Pa agreed it might not be a bad idea. Somewhere they had met a man who said the Ioway roads fanning out from Muscatine were better than most.

Thursday, May 29, the Shutes crossed the Mississippi. Caesar at the Rubicon could scarcely have felt a greater sense of destiny than young Charles and Mary Alice.

"It is only a little after one o'clock," Alice wrote, "and they (the ferry) are pulling into the landing on our side . . . the big landing apron came down. . . . The horses are blind folded . . . no one is allowed in wagon or surrey, we walked on board, the wagon and surrey wheels are blocked and the horses unhitched. . . . Charles and me hold our own horses heads and talked to them, it is really exciting . . . goodbye Illinois and here we come to Ioway . . ."

The covered wagon was the first to lumber off the ferry on the west side of the river. "Ioway dirt!" yelled Uncle Charley. Alice remembered him grinning like a boy with a new top.

Once in Iowa the sense of urgency grew. It was nearly June. The need to reach the farm, to settle in and see about crops was pressing. West Liberty, Iowa City, Coralville. . . "Mormon's town," Pa Shutes called the settlement west of the old capital. He said they would be following the 1856 hand cart trail to beyond the Des Moines. Mary Alice recorded the names of gaunt, little towns along the growing railroad right of way: Tiffin, Oxford, Homestead, Maringo (sic), Victor, Brooklyn. Track had been laid but work crews were leveling road bed and rails. They by-passed Kellogg on the railroad survey. "A town a-borning," Pa called it.

June 4, four weeks and hundreds of miles from the start of their journey, and they were in Polk County. The Shutes were not far from home. They camped along Four Mile Creek and early the next morning drove 15 miles to a new bridge crossing the Des Moines River. The town here was the new capital of the state but there was no time to stop. Pa promised they would come back some day. Alice could only comment, "it was not very grown up."

Again, they made their way along the Mormon trail through Adel and Panora. They stopped for blacksmithing on a wheel and a worn horse shoe and, at last, turned north to Carroll County.

June 11, 1862, was the day of home-coming. "Wednesday," Alice set down in the journal, "we are up early, all anxious to get to our log cabin home up on the 'Coon (Raccoon River)." Pa Shutes and Mother Ann drove ahead in the surrey: Pa wanted Ann to be the first to see the farm. Not far behind followed the covered wagon and two eager young riders. It was a moment they were never to forget. "Now," the diarist recorded, "we see the log house and all the log buildings; we just stopped and looked; after thirty six days on the move, here we are, was it really true . . ."

Pa called out, "We better get busy. Have to camp to-night." He pointed out the spring, bubbling and cold. They walked to the cabin. "Mother Ann was at the door when Pa pushed it open: the floor was dirt . . . no one said a word . . ."

They made camp and set about fixing supper. It gave them all a kind of wordless comfort to know neighbors had

been there before them. The cabin had been re-chinked and there was a mound of prairie hay for the stock. Pa remarked he would see about measuring the cabin for a slab floor tomorrow.

The last short entry was dated, Thursday, June 12. It was a busy day. The cabin had been cleaned. Mother Ann said the boys would bed down in the loft. Before long Pa would build a lean-to for Mary Alice who was growing up and almost a young lady. The men talked about going to Oxenford's mill for the slab flooring in a few days.

Alice took up the diary for the last time. She needed to set down how many miles they had traveled from Marsailles to the farm on the 'Coon. Pa Hiram had been busy too. There had been no time to check the contraption on the surrey and make a final accounting. "Just say over eight hundred miles and thirty six days," he suggested. (We) "will figure it out later."

"Eight hundred miles and thirty six days," she wrote, . . . "to Ioway. Bye for good. The end. Alice."

THE DEATH OF OLD FED

By Joan Muyskens, Editor

Monday, Aug. 5, 1968, the City Council of Des Moines, Iowa, awarded a contract to the B & R Wrecking Company for the demolition of the Old Federal Building, Fifth Avenue and Court Street, Des Moines. The 100-year old building is being razed to make room for a modernistic parking ramp to be located north and south between Walnut and Court Streets, bounded on the west by Fifth Avenue.

This action by the Des Moines City Council¹ followed a long fight by a group of Des Moines citizens interested in saving the Old Federal Building. According to LeRoy Pratt, President of the Iowa Society for the Preservation of Historic Landmarks and spokesman for the aforementioned citizens' group, the building is of great historic interest and is one of the few remaining buildings of its style of architecture.

¹ Council members include Mayor Thomas Urban, Leo Gross, Jens Grothe, Richard Olson, Robert L. Scott, jr., Charles VanderLinden, and Jack P. Woods.

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